DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 318 274 FL 800 034

AUTHOR Simich-Dudgeon, Carmen
TITLE English Literacy Development: Approaches and Strategies that Work with Limited English Proficient Children and Adults.
INSTITUTION National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, Silver Spring, MD.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 89
CONTRACT 300-86-0029
NOTE 12p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Literacy; Children; Daily Living Skills; *Educational Strategies; *English (Second Language); Grammar; Language Experience Approach; *Language Proficiency; *Limited English Speaking; *Literacy; Phonics; Teaching Methods; *Whole Language Approach

ABSTRACT

A review of selected research studies and practices on the teaching of literacy to limited English proficient (LEP) students suggests that there is considerable variation in the way literacy is defined. Several methods currently being used to develop LEP students' literacy skills are reviewed. Many LEP students continue to be taught reading skills through phonics rather than the whole language or language experience approaches. Initial research on grammar-based approaches indicates that they are not as effective as others. Striking similarities appear in the success of both adults and children being taught by the various approaches. Effective LEP adult literacy programs reflect learner needs, educational backgrounds, and abilities, almost invariably integrating a basic skills focus with instruction in life or survival skills needed for daily functioning. The following guiding principles for facilitating English literacy with LEP students were suggested by G. Wells (1987): (1) responsibility for selecting tasks, deciding on means for attaining goals, and evaluating outcomes; (2) language should be seen as a means for achieving other goals; (3) writing, reading, speaking, and listening should be seen as complementary processes; and (4) an important place should be accorded to the sharing of personal and literary stories at all stages. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

NEW FOCUS
the national clearinghouse for bilingual education
Occasional Papers in Bilingual Education
ncbe
Number 12
Summer 1989

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED318274

English Literacy Development: Approaches and Strategies that Work with Limited English Proficient Children and Adults

Carmen Simich-Dudgeon

Introduction

This paper discusses selected issues in the development of literacy in children and adults with limited English proficiency (LEP) and their relevance to literacy teaching. It presents an overview of literacy definitions and suggests trends in the current understanding about literacy, especially as it pertains to LEP learners. This overview is followed by a review of several models and approaches currently used to develop the literacy skills (reading and writing) of LEP learners. Conclusions and recommendations are also included.

The Different Meanings of Literacy

A review of the literature on the teaching of literacy suggests that there is considerable variation in the way literacy is defined. For example, Sticht suggests it is the ability of individuals to "perform some reading task imposed by an external agent between the reader and a goal the reader wishes to obtain" (1975, pp. 4-5) while Bormuth defines it as the ability to respond competently to real-world reading tasks (1975). Other definitions of literacy are linked to a school grade-level of performance ranging from a fourth- to a twelfth-grade level (Harmon, 1987). Other experts define literacy within cultural and societal parameters. Venesky, Kaestle, and Sum (1987), for example, conclude:

> literacy is... a continuum of skills that are acquired both in and outside of formal schooling and that relate directly to the ability [of individuals] to function within society (p. 3).

Freire (1985) defines literacy as "a process of search and creation by which illiterate learners are challenged to perceive the deeper meaning of language and the word, the word that, in essence, they are being denied" (p. 10).

Freire states that literacy is intrinsically linked to political and cultural factors and that literacy "develops students' consciousness of their rights, along with their critical presence in the real world" (p. 10). The use of curricula and texts which do not reflect the actual experience of the nonliterate learner, in his view, distorts the learner's reality and motivation to become literate. The work of Freire has had an impact on literacy programs in many parts of the world.

An Operational Definition of Literacy

Given the various definitions of the term "literacy," perhaps an operational definition would be most practical. One such definition is given by Wells, et al. (1981) who suggest that:

> there is no simple dichotomy between literate and nonliterate [individuals] but, instead, many varieties and degrees of literacy depending on the range of uses to which the skills of literacy are put (p. 260).

In regard to both school-age students and adults, Wells (1987) proposes a continuum of "levels" of literacy, each characterized by what students can do with written material:

Performative Level: involves decoding simple written messages and encoding ideas into writing according to written conventions.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
M. Gorena
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

FL 800 034

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Functional Level: involves coping with the needs of everyday life that involve written language.

Information Level: involves the use of literacy skills in the communication and acquisition of knowledge.

Epistemic Level: involves acting upon and transforming knowledge and experience that are, in general, unavailable to those who have never learned to read and write (p. 110).

The Wells literacy continuum implies that first-level literacy involves simple decoding and encoding skills; individuals at the second level of literacy are able to read and follow directions, complete forms requesting personal information, write messages, fill in job applications, and read newspapers and magazines. The third level allows students to use written language to access the body of knowledge available to them through schooling. The fourth level allows students to "employ symbolically-mediated skills of abstraction and reasoning in structuring and solving the various problems they confront in their everyday lives" (Wells, et al.,1981, p. 261). He also suggests that all levels of literacy could be developed in school settings although this is not always the case. More importantly, he argues that the degree to which students acquire the highest levels of literacy is related to "the extent to which the continued use of these skills is encouraged outside the school context" (p. 261).

Regardless of differences in definitions, there seems to be general agreement that literacy (for both adults and school-age children) involves the ability to use written symbols and conventions to communicate ideas about the world and to extract meaning from the written text, i.e., the ability to read and write. There also seems to be a movement within the literacy field to expand the concept of basic literacy, i.e., being able to decode and encode at a minimal level, toward a functional definition that reflects the demands of our technologically oriented society. Perhaps Wells' literacy continuum best captures the range of different stages of literacy and the relationship between the development of higher literacy levels and its usage in and outside formal school settings.

Awareness of Literacy by Youngsters

In 1985, Wells conducted a longitudinal study of native-English language development of preschool age children, where he investigated the relationship between the rate of language development and the children's home environment. He found significant correlations between overall achievement and a variable he identified as "knowledge of literacy." This variable, in turn, showed correlation with certain responses to a parent questionnaire administered before the children entered school: the number of books owned by the child, the child's interest in literacy, and the child's concentration in activities associated with literacy, e.g., being read to. Although variation in the rate of development was found, Wells concluded that children who had more opportunities to participate in verbal interaction with family members at home showed higher rates of language development before schooling.

When the children in the study reached school age, some were identified as more ready than others for school by teachers using school-approved testing measures. Wells investigated the reason for the differences between the children's school evaluations and concluded that:

> differential attainment in school, at least in the early years...was in large part due to differences between children in their experiences of written language in the preschool years and in their knowledge of the functions and mechanics of reading and writing (p. 234).

Goodman, Goodman, and Flores (1979) studied the effects of symbolic representation of print on preschool children's awareness of literacy. They concluded that young children in literate societies become aware of printed signs in their environment and relate them to their own immediate world. For example, they learn from TV advertisements how to identify print related to their favorite toys, cereals, and restaurants. Similar types of environmental stimuli are also present in literate communities where limited English proficient (or, in the case of young children, non-English proficient) children live. In many of these neighborhoods, public signs might be in both English and the home language of the LEP children; such signs can provide young children with initial literacy exposure in both English and their home language.

However, not all school-age children are exposed to print in their native languages. Many of the world's languages lack a written form. For example, Hmong and Mien (spoken in Southeast Asia), Mam and Cakchiquel (spoken in Central America), Haitian-Creole (spoken in Haiti), and Sranan (spoken in South America), do not have traditionally written forms. People who speak these languages tend to come from rural communities where, traditionally, few people learn to read and write, and they learn to do so only in languages spoken outside their communities. Although adults from such nonliterate communities will have

limited exposure to print; their children, if they come to the United States at an early age, will be exposed to written English (but not necessarily to written forms of their native languages). Children in the United States who come from homes where writing and reading are not usual (because the home language is not a written language) often face a serious disadvantage in becoming literate in English. Such children will often not have developed "knowledge of literacy" before entering school and will have a poorly developed "awareness of literacy."

Awareness of Literacy in Adults

For nonliterate adults learning English as a second language, Haverson and Haynes (1982) identified four categories of native language proficiency and education at the time they enter a literacy program:

Nonliterate: Learners who do not have literacy skills in their native language but "who speak a language for which there is a written form" (p. 3).

Preliterate: Learners who come from sociocultural groups without traditionally written languages.

Semiliterate: Learners who have 3 to 4 years of formal schooling but have minimal literacy skills in a language. They have initial knowledge of a writing system including the names of the letters and can recognize some common (written) words. They can write their name and address. These learners often have poor self-esteem and little confidence in their abilities.

Literate in a non-Roman alphabet or other writing system: Learners who are literate in their native language but have to learn a new writing system. Chinese- and Lao-speakers are examples.

Some of the adults in American ESL/literacy programs from Cambodia, Ethiopia, and Bolivia can be classified as nonliterate if they speak a language that has a traditional form of writing and they lack literacy skills. Preliterate adults are distinguishable from nonliterate adults in that they lack literacy skills and speak a native language that is not traditionally written. Some adults from Laos, such as the Hmong, and from Haiti would be classified as such.

Because of interruption in the local education systems as a result of war, natural disasters, or other reasons, some of the adults coming to this country as refugees from Central America, Ethiopia, and other countries can be classified as semiliterate since such individuals often have 4 years or less of formal schooling.

In addition to the above categories, a category for LEP adults who are literate in languages written in the Roman alphabet (e.g., Vietnamese, Spanish, Portuguese, Navajo, Samoan, etc.) should be added to the Haverson-Haynes system.

LEP adults and children who fall into the first three categories have not developed the orientation toward literacy and symbolism that would facilitate the acquisition of second language literacy. In some cases, they come from isolated rural communities, from societies with strong oral traditions that are at odds with our fast-paced, print-oriented society. For many of these learners, it is extremely difficult to adjust to a new environment and become literate in English. Sociocultural differences and lack of prior literacy experiences further complicate their second language literacy acquisition.

Because of economic necessity, many nonliterate adults have many responsibilities that do not allow them the time necessary for regular attendance in ESL/literacy classes. Mezirov, Darkenwald, and Knox (1975) surveyed teachers of adult non-literate learners in a large urban area. Eighty-five percent of the teachers believed that irregular attendance in literacy programs was the most serious obstacle to adult literacy development. In addition, Sticht (1982) suggests that it takes native English speaking adults from 80 to 120 hours of instruction to achieve one grade level of reading gains. No comparable research appears to have been done with adult LEP learners, but it is very likely that LEP adults need at least as much time to make comparable gains.

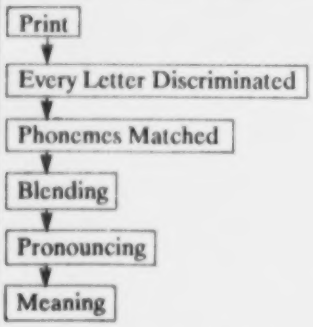
Becoming Literate in a Second Language: Models and Approaches

A review of the literature regarding currently used models of teaching reading and writing to LEP learners suggests that there are two basic models: the skills-based and the whole language. These two models can be placed at opposite ends of a continuum in terms of theoretical and methodological considerations, and between them are a series of combination approaches. This section gives an overview of the issues regarding currently used approaches with LEP learners.

Teaching Reading Using the Skills-Based Approach

The skills-based approach, also called the phonics approach, is characterized by the assumption that learners learn how to read by mastering discrete elements of language at the onset of reading instruction. Hughes (1986) uses a diagram developed by Cam-

bourne (1979) to illustrate the sequential process implicit in the skills-based approach:



Skills-based instruction is generally a component of published reading programs or is a supplement to a school (or school district) reading program. Some phonics advocates point to the fact that there is a certain amount of consistency in grapheme-phoneme (letter-sound) correspondences and make use of this consistency to support the approach.

According to Leu and Kinzer (1987), phonics reading materials use two major approaches to skills-based instruction: synthetic and analytic. Within the synthetic approach, a number of separate grapheme-phoneme correspondences are taught (e.g., C = /k/, D = /d/) followed by instruction on how to "blend" or combine sounds into words (e.g., /k/ + /u/ + /t/ = CUT). An analytic approach starts instruction from whole words to constituent parts (e.g., CAT, DOG). Then the words are separated into the smallest units to demonstrate grapheme-phoneme correspondences and "seldom are sounds isolated or is blending ability taught as a specific skill" (p. 55) in this approach.

In addition, two instructional methods are widely used with these two approaches to phonics instruction: deductive and inductive methods. In the deductive method, rules are initially presented by the teacher followed by examples of the rule. With the inductive method, examples are first presented and discussed with the children so that a rule emerges from the discussion.

The adequacy of the skills-based approach has been challenged over the years by many reading experts (Goodman, 1970; Smith, 1973), and there is research evidence that the model, by itself, is not an effective way of teaching reading to either LEP children or adults. The phonics method, it is suggested, achieves at best decoding proficiency and should be a component of the reading process, but not "the starting point" (Hughes, 1986, p. 164).

Hamayan and Pfleger (1987) caution educators about the use of the phonics approach alone because:

> unfortunately, English is a language that does not have a very high ratio of symbol-to-sound correspondence. Many symbols represent more than one sound and, similarly, many sounds are represented by more than one symbol. In addition, it is so rare to have to rely purely on phonics rules to comprehend meaningful written language that it is almost not worth the time it takes to teach specific rules! (p. 3).

No practical writing system represents all of the sounds of a language consistently. One of the most distinctive elements in an English word is stress. For example, the difference between EXport (noun) and exPORT (verb) is basically one of stress--a salient characteristic that is not indicated in the English writing system.

The focus on the sound-letter correspondences in the phonics approach creates a serious complication for the LEP student. The phonics approach is predicated on there being differences between letters because they represent different sounds and vice-versa. The native English speaker can hear the difference between /b/ and /v/ (as in BAT and VAT). But what if the student cannot hear any difference between /b/ and /v/, as is often the case for the Spanish-speaking LEP student? Or, in the case of Japanese-speaking LEP student, /l/ and /r/ (as in ALIVE and ARRIVE)? The teaching of reading cannot be postponed until the student has mastered the important phonemic distinctions of English--the mastery of such distinctions takes time. This points to the need for a different approach to reading, particularly in the case of the LEP learner.

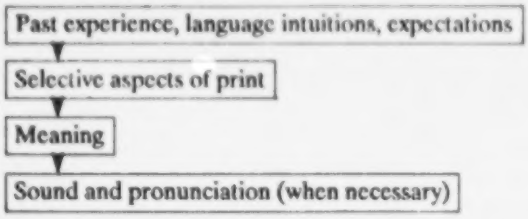
The Whole Language Approach

The whole language approach is based on the assumption that the introduction to reading must be meaningful (Goodman, 1986) and it should be developed from real communicative situations in the life of the learners. According to Hamayan and Pfleger (1987), the approach is guided by the following principles:

- Introduction to literacy (both reading and writing) should be meaningful.
- The link between oral language and print is easier to make when awareness of it emerges naturally, rather than when that link is explicitly taught.
- Affect plays an invaluable role in reading and writing. A child who enjoys reading is motivated to

> read, will read more, and by doing so, will be a better reader (p. 45).

Hughes (1986) advocates an approach that uses the learner's past experiences, expectations, and language intuitions as the basis for learning written symbols and developing reading comprehension. Pronunciation and phonics are used but are not the focus of this approach. Hughes, borrowing Cambourne's description (1979), calls the whole language approach the Inside-Out approach, because learning how to read starts with the learner's past experience and gradually includes learning of discrete language components:



This model implies that the reader is in an interactive relationship with the text and that for the reader to gain meaning from the text, he must be able to predict and anticipate meaning. (Hughes, 1986).

When the whole language approach is used to teach reading to LEP children and adults, some adjustments need to be made. Although there are many cultural differences among native English speaking learners, they share many common beliefs and values. LEP learners often do not share these beliefs and values and this may contribute to their making inappropriate predictions and inferences. This is especially the case if the texts are not reflective of their cultural experiences (Carrell and Eisterhold, 1983). Hudelson (1984) states that "reading comprehension in a second language, as in the first, is influenced by the background knowledge and the cultural framework that the reader brings to the text" (p. 226).

The importance of culturally relevant materials for teaching English reading to LEP learners cannot be over-emphasized. Research shows that LEP readers recall more from stories about their own cultural background than those of a culture foreign to them (Hudelson, 1984). Hudelson (1984) refers to two studies of ESL readers (Johnson, 1981, 1982), which conclude that the current practice of simplifying vocabulary and syntax "were less important factors in ESL readers' comprehension of a text than the cultural contents of the passage being read" (p. 227).

From the research evidence presented earlier, it appears that the whole language approach is particularly well-suited to LEP learners because it "takes into account the whole learner and builds on his or her total array of skills and abilities" (Hamayan and Pfleger, 1987, p. 4).

Language Experience Approach

As previously discussed, other approaches in addition to (or in conjunction with) the whole language approach and the phonics approach are often used with LEP learners. One of these is the Language Experience Approach (LEA), which is often a component of the whole language approach to the teaching of reading and writing. Generally, the approach follows the steps described by Strickland (1969):

> Every child brings to school a language. He can listen and he can talk. The language approach to reading begins with this language and utilizes it as the material for reading. Children are encouraged to draw and paint pictures and talk about their in-school and out-of-school interests. In the case of a picture, the teacher writes under the picture the child's story of it. If he says,"This is my Dad. He is washing the car," that is what the teacher writes for him. Stories and accounts may be composed and dictated by an individual, a group, or the whole class. The children are placed so that they can watch the teacher write. She calls attention to what she is doing. "I have to start here with a big capital letter, don't I? We'll put a mark like this at the end of a sentence. Now what else shall we say? Can anyone help me spell the word?" (pp. 266-67).

As described by Strickland, in the LEA the teacher activates the students' language and encourages the students to share their experiences with the class. The teacher writes the students' words verbatim and then teaches the students to read what they have said. This process ensures that the learners understand what they are being taught to read (Moustafa, 1987).

Hamayan and Pfleger (1987) recommend the LEA for helping the LEP learner make the initial transition from oral (English) language to reading and writing, because it allows the learner to verbally share meaningful events and stories which are then shaped into written form by the teacher. This approach allows the learner to read meaningful story units rather than isolated words, parts of words, or sentences (Hamayan and Pfleger, 1987).

The Eclectic Approach

The eclectic approach to literacy development is advocated by Haverson and Haynes (1982) because it "allows the instructor to select those materials and methods that best fit the needs of the individual learners" (p. 2). Basically, the eclectic approach incorporates the learning of whole linguistic units, from words to phrases, etc., while at the same time stressing comprehension. Once "the word-meaning relationships have been mastered, the phrase may be broken down into individual words, then into syllables, next into letters, then, finally, appropriate sounds can be given to the component parts." (p. 2) The eclectic approach is not likely to work well with adults or children, unless the content of literacy instruction is functional and meets the immediate needs of the learner.

Teaching Writing to LEP Learners

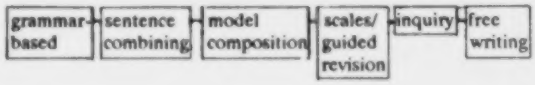
A review of the literature on writing suggests that there are basically two models at the ends of a continuum: a skills-based approach and a whole language approach which are similar, in terms of their theoretical orientation and method, to those in the area of reading. As with reading, there is a series of approaches, methods, and strategies which fall within the writing instruction continuum. This section describes selected findings in the area of writing, effectiveness of certain methods, and their application to the teaching of LEP learners.

Becoming literate, for school-age students, includes learning how to write and to use writing for academic purposes. There are many different perspectives on the role of writing and how best to teach students to use this skill. In a recent synthesis of results from his review of about 2,000 studies on writing, Hillocks (1987) attempted to answer the question: What types of knowledge do writers need for effective writing? Hillocks examined three types of research studies: those that focused on the composing process, the teaching of composition, and implications for curriculum development.

Hillocks found that at least six instructional approaches are often used to teach writing. These six approaches are presented here as they relate to the writing instruction continuum. Note that a grammar-based approach to writing focuses on discrete elements of the language (parts of speech) and is parallel to the phonics approach to reading, which also focuses on discrete elements of the written language (letters). Free writing is parallel to the LEA in that the student selects much of what he/she would like to do.

Writing Instruction Continuum

skills-based approach — *whole language approach*



In classrooms with a focus on grammar, students are first taught the parts of speech, parts of sentences, clauses, types of sentences, etc. The purpose of this approach is to "help students understand how the English language works" (Hillocks, 1987, p. 75). With the sentence combining approach, students are presented with sets of sentences which they must combine to produce more complex, yet meaningful, syntactic structures. Model composition, he found, is an extensively used instructional method which consists of "the presentation of model compositions to exemplify principles or characteristics of good writing" (p. 76). With the scales and guided revision approach, students are given sets of criteria for judging and revising compositions. If the students give a composition a low rating, they are given prompts to help them come up with ideas on how to improve that composition. Similarly, when using an inquiry-based approach, the students learn how to use sets of data in a structured fashion in order to improve their written compositions. Lastly, free writing approaches consist of allowing students to freely compose and produce written materials with the goal of developing ideas and coherent text, rather than focusing on the structure and grammar.

Hillocks found that the study of traditional grammar (i.e., the definition of parts of speech, the parsing of sentences, etc.) has no effect on raising the quality of student writing. Moreover, he found that an emphasis on a grammar-based approach "resulted in significant losses in overall quality" (p. 74). Sentence combining methods, or the practice of building complex sentences from simpler ones, was found to be "more than twice as effective as free writing as a means of enhancing the quality of student writing" (p.74). Model composition approaches were found to be much more useful than a grammar-based approach. However, Hillocks found that when modeling is used exclusively to teach writing, the overall result is "considerably less effective than other available techniques" (p. 74). The use of scales and guided revision methods was found to have a "powerful effect on enhancing the quality [of writing samples]." Hillocks states that:

> through using the [scales] systematically, students appear to internalize them and bring them to bear in generating new material even when they do not have the [scales] in front of them. (p. 74).

Inquiry-type methods were found be "on the average, ... 3 1/2 times more effective than free writing and over 2 1/2 times more effective than the traditional study of model pieces of writing." Finally, free writing methods were found to be more effective than the grammar-based method, but less effective than "other focuses of instruction examined" (p.74).

Hillocks suggests that "the most important knowledge is procedural: general procedures of the composing process and specific strategies for the production of discourse and the transformation of data for use in writing" (p. 81). His conclusion is that to encourage students to be effective writers, changes that reflect research findings on writing must be made in writing curricula and methodology.

Many of the approaches currently used to teach writing to LEP children and adults appear to be similar to those analyzed by Hillocks (1987). Although a critical review of the research on teaching writing to LEP learners has not yet been carried out, there are initial research findings that indicate that some writing methods work better with LEP students than others. The free writing approach has been reported to work successfully with both LEP learners and English-speaking students (Kreeft and Seyoum, 1987). One variation of this approach is the use of dialogue journals (Staton, 1987). In this approach, the teacher and the students engage in active written interaction through journals whose topics and format are initiated by the students themselves. The role of the teacher is to encourage composition development and to act as a collaborator with the student, rather than as "an outsider who simply elicits and promotes writing" (Kreeft and Seyoum, 1987). A by-product of this approach is that the students seem to learn the conventions of writing by having meaningful communication with the teacher.

There is some evidence that the modeling approach has been used with success with LEP school-age children and adults. Using this approach, the teacher and students write stories (or models) using a four-step sequence: inventing, composing, revising, and editing. Students are encouraged to share their stories, folk tales, and literature. This approach, as well as the dialogue journal approach, allows the student to maintain a bond with his/her cultural background and experience (Pfingstag, 1984).

Hudelson (1988) reviewed research on writing instruction of school-age LEP children, and her findings add support to arguments in favor of a whole language approach to writing and to English literacy in general. These findings can be summarized as follows:

- ESL learners, while they are still learning English, can write: they can create their own texts.
- ESL learners can respond to the world or others and can use another learner's responses to their work in order to make substantive revisions in their texts.
- Texts produced by ESL writers look very much like those produced by young native English speakers. These texts demonstrate that the writers are making predictions about how the written language works. As the writers predictions change, the texts change.
- Children approach writing and develop as writers differently from one another.
- The classroom environment has a significant impact on the development of ESL children as writers.
- Culture may affect the writers' view of writing, of the functions or purposes of writing, and of themselves as writers.
- The ability to write in the native language facilitates the child's ESL writing in several different ways. [It] provides learners with information about the purposes of writing...second language learners apply the knowledge about writing gained in first language settings to second language settings (p. 1).

Conclusions and Recommendations

In this review of selected research studies and practices on the teaching of literacy to LEP students, encouraging signs of change have been found, but there are still big gaps. Many LEP children (and adults) continue to be taught reading skills through the phonics approach rather than the whole language and the LEA approaches which have been found to be effective means of teaching English language literacy skills to LEP learners. As for teaching writing to LEP learners, it would appear from initial research evidence that many LEP students are currently being taught to write through a grammar-based approach that is not as effective as other approaches.

A review of literacy research with LEP adults and children shows that there are striking similarities in findings regarding which approaches are most effec-

tive. The whole language approach and the Language Experience Approach seem to be most effective with LEP learners. Both children and adults are said to develop second language literacy when the content of instruction is functional, incorporates the culture and experience of the learner, and allows for individual differences related to age and native language literacy.

Finally, the debate as to what methods are the most appropriate for use with nonliterate, language minority children and adults will certainly continue as part of a general debate on which methods are the most effective in teaching literacy skills to students of English. However, findings of research studies with nonliterate, native English speakers and non-native LEP learners suggest that student-oriented, functionally developed programs are the most effective since they increase the possibility of transfer to real life situations.

Effective LEP adult literacy programs "reflect the needs, educational backgrounds, and abilities of the learners as well as realistic expectations on the part of the instructor" (Haverson and Haynes, 1982, p. 2). An analysis of adult literacy programs by the Joint Dissemination Review Panel, U.S. Department of Education, found that the most successful programs almost invariably integrate a basic skills focus with instruction in life or "survival" skills needed to function effectively in the everyday world (Darkenwald, 1986). Adult literacy programs of this nature use a whole language approach to reading and writing, with variations that integrate phonics instruction at different stages of the learning process.

Finally, Wells (1987) suggests a number of universal "guiding principles" that can be used as the underlying framework on which to facilitate the acquisition of English literacy by LEP children and adults:

- Children should be treated as active constructors of their own knowledge and understanding: they should be encouraged to share the responsibility for selecting the tasks in which they engage, for deciding on the means for attaining their goals, and for evaluating the outcomes of their attempts.
- Language should be seen, in general, as a means of achieving other goals, even when attention needs to be focused on the grammar and sound systems of a language.
- Writing, reading, speaking, and listening should be seen as complementary processes, each building on and feeding the others in an integrated approach to the exploration of ideas and feelings, the consideration of alternatives, and finally, the formulation and communication of conclusions.
- An important place should be accorded, at all stages, to the sharing of stories, both those in the literature of the [children's] culture and those that children themselves construct on the basis of their own experiences... stories provide an important bridge from the particularized example to the general principle and from the basic narrative mode in which we all make sense of our individual experience to the more abstract logical modes of exposition and argument (p. 121).

References

Bormuth, J. R. (1975). Reading literacy: Its definitions and assessment. In J. B. Caroll and J.S. Chall (Eds.), *Toward a literate society* (pp. 61-100). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Cambourne, B. (1979). How important is theory to the reading teacher? *Australian Journal of Reading,* 2(2) 78-90.

Carrell, P. L. and Eisterhold, J. C. (1983). Schema theory and ESL reading pedagogy. *TESOL Quarterly,* 17(4), 553-573.

Darkenwald, G. (1986). *Effective approaches to teaching basic skills to adults: A research synthesis.* (Contract No. OERI-P86-3015.) Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

Freire, P. (1985). *The politics of education: Culture, power and liberation.* South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Garvey Publications, Inc.

Goodman, K. (1970). Reading: A psycholinguistic guessing game. In H. Singer and R. Rudell (Eds.), *Theoretical models and processes of reading.* Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Goodman, K. (1986). *What's whole in whole language?* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Goodman, K., Goodman, Y., and Flores, B. (1979). *Reading in the bilingual classroom: Literacy and biliteracy.* Silver Spring, MD: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education.

Grove, M. (1981). Psycholinguistic theories and ESL reading. In C. W. Twyford, W. Diehl, and K. Feathers (Eds.) *Reading English as a second language: Moving from theory. Monograph in Teaching and Learning,* 4, 3-20. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Hamayan, E., and Pfleger, M. (1987). *Developing literacy in English as a second language: Guidelines for teachers of young children from non-literate backgrounds.* Silver Spring, MD: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education.

Harmon, D. (1987). *Illiteracy: A national dilemma.* New York: The Cambridge Book Company.

Haverson, W. W., and Haynes, J. L. (1982). *ESL/literacy for adult learners.* Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Hillocks, Jr., G. (1987). Synthesis of research on teaching writing. *Educational Leadership,* 44(8), 71-82.

Hudelson, S. (1984). Kan yu ret an rayt en ingles: Children become literate in English as a second language. *TESOL Quarterly,* 18(2), 221-238.

Hudelson, S. (1988, Dec.). *Children's writing in ESL.* ERIC Digest. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Hughes, J. (1986). Inside-out, outside-in: Which approach is best for the second language learner? *Australian Journal of Reading,* 9(3), 159-166.

Johnson, P. (1981). Effects on reading comprehension of language complexity and cultural background of a text. *TESOL Quarterly,* 15(2), 169-181.

Johnson, P. (1982). Effects on reading comprehension of building background knowledge. *TESOL Quarterly,* 16(4), 503-516.

Kreeft Peyton, J., and Seyoum, M. (1987). Teacher strategies and their effect on student writing. *Dialogue,* 6(1), 3-5.

Leu, Jr., D. G., and Kinzer, C. K. (1987). *Effective reading instruction in the elementary grades.* Columbus, OH: Merrill Publishing.

Mezirov, J., Darkenwald, G., and Knox, A. (1975). *Last gamble on education: Dynamics on adult basic education.* Washington, DC: Adult Education Association.

Moustafa, M. (1987). Comprehensible input plus the language experience approach: A long term perspective. *Reading Teacher,* 41(3), 376-286.

Pfingstag, N. (1984). Showing writing: modeling the process. *Writing and Composition: TESOL Newsletter,* 13(1), Supplement No. 1.

Shepherd, T. R. (1977). *The language experience approach as a means to reading proficiency and language proficiency in first and second languages.* Proceedings of the First International Conference on Frontiers in Language Proficiency and Dominance Testing. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University.

Smith, F. (1973). *Essays into literacy.* London: Heinemann Educational Books, Ltd..

Staton , J. (1987). New research on dialogue journals. *Dialogue,* 6(1), 1-3.

Sticht, T. G. (1975). *Reading for working: A functional literacy.* Alexandria, VA: Human Resources Research Association.

Sticht, T. G. (1982). *Basic skills in defense.* Alexandria, VA: Human Resources Research Organization.

Strickland, R. (1969). *The language arts in the elementary school.* Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath and Company.

Venesky, R. L., Kaestle, C. F., and Sum, A. M. (1987). *The subtle danger.* Princeton, NJ: Center for the Assessment of Educational Progress, Educational Testing Service.

Wells, G., et al. (1981). *Learning through interaction: The study of language development.* Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Wells, G. (1985). Preschool literacy-related activities and success in school. In D. R. Olson, N. Torrance, and A. Hildyard (Eds.), *Literacy, language, and learning: The nature and consequences of reading and writing.* Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Wells, G. (1987). Apprenticeship in literacy. *Interchange,* 18(1- 2), 109-123.

About the Author

Dr. Carmen Simich-Dudgeon is a Research Analyst at the Division for Research and Evaluation, Office of Bilingual Education Minority Lanaguages Affairs, U.S. Department of Education. She is a co-author of NCBE Program Information Guide No. 9, *Helping Limited English Proficient Children Communicate in the Classroom.*

This paper was written by Dr. Simich-Dudgeon in her private capacity. No official support by the U.S. Department of Education is intended or should be inferred.

The author would like to thank the following people for their assistance in the writing of this paper: Dr. Donna Christian, Center for Applied Linguistics; Dr. Adeline Becker and Jane Yedlin, Multifunctional Resource Center Area 1; Rosario Gingràs, COMSIS Corporation; and Harpreet K. Sandhu and Theodora Predaris, NCBE.

This publication was prepared under Contract No. 300860069 for the Office of Bilingual Education Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA), U.S. Department of Education. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of Education, nor does the mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

Harpreet K. Sandhu, NCBE Director
Kendra Lerner, Publications Coordinator

Are You Familiar with the National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education?

The National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education (NCBE) provides a variety of services to respond to your questions related to the education of limited English proficient (LEP) students.

Information Services

NCBE responds to requests for information from practitioners and other people interested in the education of LEP students. Drawing upon our extensive resource collection, databases, and referral network, we can provide a wide variety of information on many topics such as bilingual education, ESL, educational technology, refugee education, and vocational education.

Electronic Information System

NCBE provides an Electronic Information System that users may access free of charge. With this system, users may search seven databases, read announcements on the electronic bulletin board, and transmit requests for information to NCBE.

Publications

NCBE develops and disseminates a wide variety of publications, including program information guides, occasional papers, and a free bimonthly newsletter, *FORUM*. We also disseminate a full catalog of additional publications. NCBE publications address a wide variety of topics of interest to educators.

To learn more about NCBE services, contact us Monday - Friday, 7:00 am to 6:00 pm (EST). Outside the Washington, DC area, call (800) 647-0123; in the Washington, DC area, call (301) 588-6898. If your prefer to contact us by mail, our address is:

ncbe the national clearinghouse for bilingual education

8737 Colesville Road, Suite 900, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

"U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1989 249-664 Region 3